In The Realm of Literature and Art

BOOK REVIEWS.

BROKE OF COVENDEN. By J. C. Snaith, auhtor of "The Great Age," etc. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co.

THE preface to this novel is a surpassing piece of wit on the comedy of life as this is set out by that past master of comic production, the god of irony. And the preface gives a preliminary accounting of Broke of Covenden, the hero of this tale of modern English country life. According to the writer, Broke "owes his appearance in our pages to the fact that he is a man, belonging by right of birth to the twelfth century after Christ projected without rhyme or reason into our enlightened twentieth. He is a survival of the medieval, the golden age of knighthood, when it was not improper for your urban burgess to strap a dagger to his stomach, and pater-familias stalked to church in chain-mail armor. He is handed down to us from 800 years ago in all his authenticity. He has been preserved miraculously like a saurian embedded in a rock. Nothing is changed in him but the time of day, his hatter and his tailor. He no longer wears the bassinet as when he rode to Runnymede to put his mark to Magna Charta. In our Utopia he sits in parliament in a black silk hat. But scratch him and you find the feudal baron." This is Broke of Covenden and about this bulwark of conservatism J. C. Snaith has built a novel of character, of event and of English tradition that in many a long day will not be excelled for insight, for discrimination and for true literary achievement. This is a novel of the first order, and one that calls for more than a single reading.

OUTLINES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. By Charles H. Stockton, author of "The Laws and Usages of War at Sea," etc. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Washington: Woodward & Lothrop.

By reason of the European war international matters have, in every quarter of the globe, become local and immediate in their appeal. This situation has served to increase enormously the demand for dependable information and competent discussion of one and another of the manifold aspects of internationalism. The book in hand is, within the purpose and range of its subject, a response to this demand. It is a concrete, well organized, authentic outline study of international law. Its treatment covers the two and a half centuries which, running backward from the present, reach the close of the thirty years' war in 1648. Within this period the modern science of international law has had its rise and growth. The discussion here opens with a broad historical survey of this development. It then passes to a special study of the origin, functions, powers and obligations of sovereign states, since these are the institutions to which the laws of nations apply. This is followed by an exposition of the intercourse between states in times of peace, through diplomatic relations, conventions, conferences and arbitrations. The fourth part of the book treats of the war relations of belligerents. The fifth and concluding part defines the relations between belligerents and neutrals. The orderly and comprehensive character of this study forms but a part of its value. Besides this, it is an authoritative discussion and a practical one. It is, moreover, abreast with the present moment of international complication. It is thoroughly conversant with the modern developments of maritime and aerial warfare, with the world-wide interests and implications of the Panama canal, and with the most recent findings of conferences and tribunals of The Hague.

The peculiarly vital quality of this study is due in large part to the sense of proportion that places emphasis on living issues in their pratical bearings upon the present and the immediate future. It is a most readable book, meeting the special student and the general reader in equal helpfulness.

ESSAYS: Political and Historical. By Charlemagne Tower, LL. D., author of "The Marquis de Lafayette in the American Revolution." Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

For the most part the essays of this volume are of international significance. One examines the Monroe doctrine, pointing out how this doctrine appears to the political consciousness of European statesmen. One reviews the obligations which the United States by treaty took upon itself concerning the administration of the Panama canal. One analyzes the relations of the United States to arbitration for the settlement of international disputes. One discusses the most recent developments of the laws of nations. And one makes urgent and serious consideration of diplomacy as a profession. All are alike in intellectual thoroughness of treatment. All are equal in clear and vigorous statement. Back of these essays, giving them weight and balance and carrying power, is a practical knowledge of American politics and a practical experience in European diplomacy. This double equipment gives Mr. Tower a vantage point of observation that is calculated to give great force to his opinions of the United States as a world power.

ALSACE AND LORRAINE: From Caesar to Kaiser; 58 B. C.—1871 A. D. By Ruth Putnam, author of "Charles the Bold," etc. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

At the moment Alsace-Lorraine rivals Belgium itself in a world's interest and concern. And as one moves backward in his more or less limited knowledge of history he has vague and fugitive reminders that Alsace and Lorraine have ever been the foot ball of warring neighbors. Happily, this little story by Ruth Putnam comes just when it is most needed to set the vicissitous career of these provinces clear to many uncertain minds. The story opens with Julius Caesar's invasion of Gaul 2,000 years ago. It closes with the treaty of Frankfort in 1871, when Alsace-Lorraine passed under the German kaiser. In between these two points there are records of aggression and war and conquest and treaty, a succession that repeats itself over and over, and each time with some new violation of the middle lands of Alsace and Lorraine. The writer has animated these facts of history with a personality. And the reader finds himself warming to the woes of these hapless provinces as they are ground up in the devastating hatred of two warring peoples, much as he would warm to pity over some helpless creature that was being torn and trampled and dismembered by two ferocious beasts rushing to devour each other.

Now is the time to study Alsace-Lorraine. And the writer has done good service to gather its scattered records into this coherent picture for the use of students and readers.

A GREAT PEACE MAKER: The Diary of James Gallatin, Secretary to Albert Gallatin; 1813—1827. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Washington: Woodward & Lothrop.

When, a hundred years ago, Albert Gallatin went to Ghent as one of the envoys from the United States to negotiate with envoys from Great Britain for the peace that resulted in the treaty of Ghent, he took with him, as secretary, his son, James Gallatin, then a lad of seventeen. Young Gallatin acted in the same capacity also at other times when his father was sent on foreign missions by the government at Washington. This diary covers these various diplomatic commissions. James Gallatin gave the diary to his grandson, who now for the first time puts it into public print. It is an interesting document, fresh, lively and abounding in evidence that young Gallatin was not at all overawed by the important ceremonials of treaty making and diplomatic negotiations. Its historic value lies in the fact that it does give a day-by-day report of the progress of the deliberations at Ghent. It has, beside this, a highly picturesque value. It is a stage across which many notable personality passes, many a celebrated event shapes and dissolves. One catches a glimpse of Napoleon and Wellington, of Lafayette and Mme. de Stael, of Chateaubriand and Mme. Recamier, of George IV and many other notable celebrities of the early nineteenth century. The diary gives also all sorts of intimate off-hand glimpses into the private life of the Gallatins, revealing in this manner the lovable qualities of Albert Gallatin, qualities which were more or less concealed in the activities of his public career. An introduction by James Bryce sketches a background against which the engaging motley of this diary melts into something like unity of effect. In many respects this is a valuable publication. In every respect it is an engaging and delightful one.

THE LIFE OF THOMAS BRACKETT REED. By Samuel W. McCall. Illustrated. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

The public career of Thomas Brackett Reed is interwoven with a period of the political history of the United States, as it is also a calculable force in the making of that period of history. And, very fittingly, it is this aspect of the American statesman's life that takes on emphasis and and elaboration at the hands of his competent and sympathetic biographer. The first three chapters of this study cover the early life of Mr. Reed and lead up to his entrance to the Congress of the United States. The remaining nineteen chapters make an estimate of his character, his work and his influence, through the medium of more than twenty years of congressional activity. This was not a spectacular period, but it was one of staidly important development. Within this time there rose the agitation over the free coinage of silver, and the settlement of the monetary standard belongs here. It was the time of civil service reform, also. It was a season of acute southern racial problems that were disturbing industry and politics so seriously. It was also, to be sure, the date of one of the periodic tariff revivals and revisions. A champion of protection, an advocate of civil service reform, an enemy to inflation and a bitter foe to the obstructive tradition of procedure in the House of Representatives, Mr. Reed, both by principle and temperament, became a whirlwind force in the political policies of his party and in reconstructing the business methods of the branch of Congress in which he was the most conspicuous and dominating figure of his day. In so far as this is possible Mr. McCall, by means of extracts from his own speeches and letters, permits Mr. Reed to stand here in his own person, so that readers may catch the flavor of its original and flashing personality. A friend of the Maine statesman—in a sense a political disciple, and certainly an admiring young colleague, Mr. McCall has turned these privileges to good account in this comprehensive and fair-minded study of the life of Thomas Brackett Reed.

SONGS OF KABIR. Translated by Rabindranath Tagore, author of "The Crescent Moon." Assisted by Evelyn Underhill. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Kabir was an Indian poet who lived 500 years ago or so. And the heart of Kabir was filled with a rapture of love for God, whom he saw in the manifold life about him, and felt in the faintest of nature's stirrings. To Kabir God was in the ruffling breeze as well as in the devastating storm, in the blade of grass as in the forest tree, in the tiny fugitive helpless life as much as in the proud spirit of man. And the philosopher in Kabir wove out of this universal presence of God a mode of life, a theory of death and a vision of the hereafter. And the poet in the philosopher and the man sang rapturous songs of love and yearning to become one with this soul of the universe. The songs are oriental, like the songs of Solomon. The philosophy, too, is of the east. But the man is modern, modern as Jesus Christ is modern, and like Him in loving kindness and simplicity, and in a broad world-sympathy.

A preface by Evelyn Underhill sketches the life of Kabir and gives an outline of his work and his influence. As one reads this translation he feels keenly that the genius of Tagore himself is the best of all mediums for the poems of this fellow mystic.

EDUCATION THROUGH PLAY. By Henry S. Curtis, author of "Play and Recreation in the Open Country," etc. New York: The Macmillan Company.

The distinctive feature of this valuable book is that it is the outgrowth of practical experiment and actual experience. To be sure, there is book authority here also, psychology, physiology and specialized investigation. But, happily, the book is not overloaded with such authority, nor are its facts smothered by it. What is set down here is what has been done in a natural way under normal conditions, what has been seen and tested and freed from the superfluity of nonsense that is likely to attach itself to the formal study of children. Out of the real play of children Mr. Curtis has gathered up and put into this book the growth that this play is able to contribute to the bodies, and minds, and morals, of children. And he has, moreover, expressed this in the language of fathers and mothers and not exclusively in the terms of pedagogy. This gives the study a wider usefulness than it could otherwise acquire. It is a comprehensive study of play as an educative force. The writer examines English and German, as well as American schools, to see what part play has in their studies and recreations. In this connection he gives an interesting account of the well known schools of Gary, Ind. The book includes a practical discussion of high school athletics, of summer playgrounds, of vacation recreations. It gives, besides, a well organized view of the school as a social center. All in all, it is an admirable study, stamped with good sense and an easy communicable manner, on a very important and fundamental subject. Mr. Curtis has had a large experience in formulating and carrying out public recreation plans. Therefore, what he has to say on this subject is well worth the attentive consideration of those having to do with the general welfare of children.

THE MODERN CITY AND ITS PROBLEMS. By Frederic C. Howe, Ph. D., author of "The City; the Hope of Democracy," etc. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Washington: Woodward & Lothrop.

This is a fresh and lively study of the modern city, set in what the author considers the most urgent of its many problems. By way of approach to this subject Mr. Howe passes in review the ancient city and the medieval. The bulk of this study centers upon the American city, though the author makes frequent use of European cities for the sake of comparison and illustration, often, too, for the sake of emulation. The topics here are familiar. Municipal housing, municipal ownership of public utilities, city planning, municipal home rule, the new city charter and the old, the city as a social agency, and so on. What one gets out of this very up-to-date and interesting study is that the city should take over certain lines of city business. He learns, too, that America is far behind Europe in this respect. He is made aware that the piecemeal and unorganized social efforts of the average American city are futile where they are not positively harmful. The book is a suggestive and stimulating study of a social experiment about whose value authority is pretty evenly divided. Indeed, these social studies of municipal administration alternate in their advocacy of it and their opposition to it, much as the daily press accounts of the war publish in parallel columns the contradictory claims of the Germans and the allies. This situation is, however, nothing against the studies, for out of the general agitation the public is getting an education.

NEWS AND NOTES OF ART AND ARTISTS.

THE Corcoran Gallery of Art reopened the first of this week with its permanent collection rehung and the galleries showing their usual arrangement. There is an excitement about the special exhibition, an interest in the newness of the exhibits and a pleasure in becoming acquainted with the newer tendencies in cotemporary art, but, after all, there is invariably a satisfaction when the old order of things is restored and the friends of long standing resume their habitual places.

This to a degree may be taken as a pretty fair test of the genuine worth of the Corcoran Gallery's permanent collection. If the paintings that have been purchased from time to time had been of merely passing interest or mediocre value, they would sink to insignificance when compared to the best of current productions. But it is not so. To the contrary, each time they are temporarily displaced and brought back they seem to have an added dignity and strength. Certainly this is also a tribute to those by whom they have been selected.

Five or six of the Corcoran Gallery's pictures have been loaned for exhibition in the fine arts palace at the Panama-Pacific exposition. Among the most important of these are "Niagara," by F. E. Church; "Loretta," by George Fuller, and Chester Harding's portrait of John Randolph.

The new paintings purchased from the exhibition go far toward making up in space and interest for those temporary losses, and it must be admitted that the recent acquisitions take their places very well with the other permanent possessions. The picture by J. Alden Weir, receiving the first prize, has been hung in the third American room, next to the painting by Sargeant Kendall, and appears to much better advantage than when hung in the temporary exhibition.

The painting by Philip L. Hale, "Girl With a Muff," which received the Norman Wait Harris prize in Chicago this winter and was purchased from the collection here just before the date of closing, has been hung in the end room in the first series, where it may be seen to excellent advantage. Philip L. Hale is a pupil of J. Alden Weir and has been for some time an instructor in the school of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. He is a son of the late Edward Everett Hale, and a very gifted painter. His wife, Lillian Westcott Hale, was also represented in the cotemporary exhibition, to which she contributed a very charming interior and a remarkably beautiful and subtly rendered portrait of a young girl with dark waving hair.

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AS a loan from Mrs. Louis Bennett of Philadelphia the Corcoran gallery has recently received and placed on exhibition a portrait study entitled "The Dutchman," painted by the late Thomas P. Anschutz, for many years chief instructor in the school of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

This is an excellent example of Mr. Anschutz's work and a very fine picture. It shows a Dutchman of long ago with staff in hand and hat on head clothed in brown with white collar and cuffs, a picturesque though very simple attire. He stands with some air of gay distinction in a room wherein many of discerned carved furniture and brass objects. Obviously it is a posed model, but at the same time it is a figure well constructed and most admirably painted.

Mr. Anschutz belonged essentially to the academic school. His work was invariably conservative. Eminently sound, technically fine, it barely escaped greatness through lack of imaginative quality. He was perhaps one of the best teachers we have had in this country, and while as a painter he won real distinction, it is probable that his greatest contribution to the field of American art came from his leadership in the school of the Pennsylvania Academy. The best painting which has ever been done has been done along the lines followed by Mr. Anschutz, and if he did not attain the most complete success it was simply because along this road he did not advance quite far enough. His work well merits a place in our public collections, and it is to be hoped that he will eventually be represented in the foremost of our American galleries.

ANOTHER interesting and valuable loan recently received by the Corcoran Gallery of Art is a medallion portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, which has been loaned by Mrs. John C. Fremont. The original of this portrait was modeled in 1887. Sittings for the head and shoulders took place in New York when Stevenson was ill there on his way to the Adirondacks. The hands were modeled from studies made at Hanasquan just before Stevenson sailed for Samoa. On the background is inscribed in simple letters Stevenson's poem which begins:

> Youth now flees on feathered foot,
> Faint and fainter sounds the flute,

and ends:

> Life is over. Life was gay.
> We have come the primrose way.

For some reason the original did not reach Stevenson until 1894, when he wrote the sculptor as follows:

> My Dear Saint-Gaudens: This is to tell you that the medallion has been at last triumphantly transported up the hill and placed over my smoking room mantelpiece. It is considered by every one a first-rate but flattering portrait. We have it in a very good light, which brings out the artistic merits of the godlike sculptor to great advantage. As for my own opinion, I believe it to be a speaking likeness and not flattering at all; possibly a little the reverse. The verses look remarkably well. Yours very sincerely,
> ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

In 1897-99 Saint-Gaudens modeled a variation of this portrait for St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, making the panel rectangular, extending the figure and placing in the hand a pen in the place of a cigarette, as seemed more befitting the place in which it was to have permanent position. It is this larger memorial tablet with which the majority are most familiar, rather than this smaller one, of which Mrs. Fremont is so fortunate as to possess a replica, presented to her, it is understood, by no less than Stevenson himself. Fine and impressive as is the larger tablet, there is in it not quite the spontaneity and intimacy that one finds expressed in this smaller medallion. Saint-Gaudens was deeply impressed by Stevenson's remarkable personality and he went to the modeling of this portrait with real inspiration. It would be difficult to say that he never did a better work, but certainly it is to be numbered among his best as well as most famous productions.

For the present the medallion has been hung in the gallery on the main floor, which is given over almost exclusively to modern sculpture.

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THE art talk at the Corcoran School Monday was given by Richard N. Brooke, who took as his subject "Form and Design." It seemed strange, he said, that among art students the importance of these two elements in art should need emphasis, but though they are of the utmost importance they are only too frequently overlooked and disregarded.

Color, Mr. Brooke explained, was surface beauty, and helpless unless supported, yet today the tendency was to overestimate the value of mere color. This is, he pointed out, a materialistic age—an age in which the material and the ideal have become widely separated. In art those things which make material appeal triumph rather than those having ideal qualities.

There is, he said, also an excess of individualism which tolerates no leadership, recognizes no superiority. These two tendencies find expression in our art as also in the disturbed conditions of warring nations. All of the art of the past which has endured, he explained, has had the distinction of beauty of form and design, both of which make not only an esthetic but intellectual appeal.

By design, Mr. Brooke meant not merely composition, or intention, but ultimate purpose shaped by a knowledge of resultant effect. L'hermitte, the French painter, he gave as an example of an artist who composed his pictures well, but did not design them. John W. Alexander, on the other hand, he mentioned as one who actually designed as well as composed every picture he painted. Del Sarto and Veronese, he said, designed their draperies beautifully, each fold being arranged in relation to the other folds, and with special significance.

Pattern, Mr. Brooke explained, was a feature of design, but that it alone could not completely satisfy. Herein, perhaps, lies the difference between a picture framed and placed on a wall and a beautiful piece of woven fabric similarly placed. And yet today we hear continually of color and pattern as if they in themselves were ends. Mr. Brooke spoke hopefully of the future, declaring his own conviction that all that was requisite today for the attainment of great results was the development of some great leader, such as Joseph Israels had been in his land and day.

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THE Water Color Club's annual exhibition opens a fortnight from today, and thereafter until the spring is well advanced there will be a succession of interesting exhibitions in this city. Early in March a special exhibition of paintings by Ben Foster will be shown in the Corcoran gallery in the loan room at the head of the grand staircase. About the same time the National Association of Portrait Painters will hold an exhibition in the National gallery, and before either of these are closed the annual exhibition of the Society of Washington Artists will be opened in the hemicycle of the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

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THE annual exhibition of the Architectural League of New York opens today in the Fine Arts Galleries, on west 57th street, in that city. This exhibition comprises not merely architectural work, but work, in the allied arts—sculpture, painting and decoration—and is one of the most interesting held during the entire seasop.

At the National Arts Club, New York, the American Water Color Society is holding its annual exhibition, which after the 1st of March goes out on a circuit of the chief cities under the direction of the American Federation of Arts.

In the Knoedler Galleries an exhibition is being held of paintings by the foremost artists, such as Sargent, Weir, Wiles, Ochtman, Carlsen, Cooper, Vonnoh and others, for the benefit of the families of French artists. This exhibition is organized by the committee which earlier in the year sent out an appeal for funds and raised several thousand dollars for the sufferers thereby. The pictures are priced as low as possible, but the standard is upheld to a high level.

THE hundred and tenth annual exhibition of paintings and sculpture to be held by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, in Philadelphia; opens tonight with a private view and reception. This exhibition, which is one of the most notable of the year, will remain open until March 28.

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THERE would seem to be a veritable chain of exhibitions at this time, for on Monday evening, February 8, an exhibition of cotemporary American art will be opened in the Peabody Institute, Baltimore, under the auspices of the Peabody Institute and the Charcoal Club of Baltimore. This exhibition will continue until March 9, and will be open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. As the Peabody Institute and the Walters Gallery are in the same vicinity, it would be quite possible to visit both the exhibition and the Walters collection the same day.

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THE painting of the battleship Oregon by W. L. Halsall of Plymouth, which has hung for some time in the National Gallery of Art, is to be sent in the near future to the Panama-Pacific exposition, and later will probably find a permanent place in one of the Oregon state buildings, prominent persons in Oregon having long coveted its possession. If not purchased by some naval organization or by the government as historical data this would seem a suitable destiny for this interestingly accurate and impressive work.

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THE next lecture in the popular course on "The Decorative Arts," being given by Frank Alvah Parsons of New York under the auspices of the Washington Society of the Fine Arts, has unavoidably been postponed from February 9 to February 16, when it will be given, as usual, in the auditorium of the National Museum. As the attendance in the past has exceeded the capacity of the hall, no further tickets will be issued, even to members of the society, but as far as the capacity of the hall permits admission will be granted under the usual conditions.

LEILA MECHLIN.

THE OBSERVER FINDS ALL SORTS OF SENTIMENT IN THE SENDING OF VALENTINES

ST. VALENTINE'S day tales? Where in the world did one find them? Yet the order had gone forth that St. Valentine's day tales were in order, and the demand had been made in peremptory fashion.

St. Valentine's day tales; stories interwoven with lace and lavender, wherein a saintly old lady rehearses to her granddaughter sweet romances of youth—something like that. Huh——

As the Observer stood on the street corner, wondering in a bewildered way exactly how one found St. Valentine and extracted an interview with him, his eyes happened upon a short, nervous man who was hurrying down the street. This man is a poet. He proves the fact by his tremendous upsweeping brush of black hair and his tremendous down-swooping black bow tie. Invariably he is in a hurry (though where he goes is a matter of mystery) and invariably he can produce ideas.

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As he paralleled the Observer's station the latter reached out and grabbed him, forcefully.

"I must talk with you," said the Observer, earnestly.

"Hurry, then," ordered the poet, "for I've an engagement."

"I want a few sweet sentimental stories on St. Valentine's day."

The Observer got no farther. Instantly the poet's face became an apoplectic red, and his whole frame quivered. He uttered a low, animal snarl.

"You——" he gulped. "You——" He had tried again and failed.

The Observer gazed at him as one might gaze at a rabbit, suddenly turned ferocious.

"If I have offended——" began the Observer. The poet put him off.

"You——" This business of the second personal pronoun was becoming tiresome. The poet suddenly let fly his feelings in a single terrific blast.

"I have written 268 valentine sentiments," he cried, wildly. "I have done this; and now you come and try to stir me up! St. Valentine's day—Bosh! It's a chance to earn a little money pot-boiling, that's what it is. Do you think that I'm really writing that trash because I think it's good?"

Clearly it was time to call all bets off and make a new book.

"I never suspected that you wrote a St. Valentine's day poem in your life," said the Observer, indignantly. "You needn't come charging at me like this when I merely asked you a question."

The poet's mouth opened in fishlike astonishment.

"You didn't?" He repeated.

"Certainly not," replied the Observer.

"Then," said the poet, in a milder voice, "if you will go with me I will tell you a few little stories that I have heard. They may be true or they may not. I do not vouch for them."

Forthwith he led the Observer to a quick lunchroom and purchased coffee. And these are the tales he told. It is needless to quote him:

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Young John Henry Smith met Miss Arabel Jones at one of those functions where one dances until he has reached the ultimate of endurance and then hurls tea into himself. Immediately he became one of the many callflike followers of Miss Jones, a thoroughly infatuated young man who trailed her whenever he could, gazing at her with brooding, sorrowful eyes, and occasionally, uttering bovine noises.

Winter crowded onto the heels of spring, and eventually the 14th of February arrived, and John Henry Smith, being a young man of enterprise and determination, sent to Miss Jones a valentine, which cost $3.59, and which contained a wealth of lurid sentiments. Being aware of the niceties, he did not, of course, sign his name to the valentine. This anonymous contribution reached Miss Jones' home about one hour before John Henry, dressed to the verge of foppishness, and wearing, with other things, a large expectant smile, made his appearance at the door.

He was let in. Shortly afterward Miss Jones entered the room and immediately John Henry Smith scented trouble. He was no diplomatist. Disraeli and Talleyrand had it on him seven ways from the ace. But there was that in Miss Jones' upturned chin and ice-refrigerating pose which warned, even as a reliable barometer.

"Anything wrong?" inquired the young man.

"Nothing."

He smiled fatuously. Surely his valentine had won some distinction. It cost $3.50!

"Did you receive any valentines today?" he asked.

About two dozen," she replied, distantly.

This floored him, as it would any one who was unexpectedly overtaken by an avalanche.

A long silence ensued.

"You must excuse me," said Miss Jones, rising abruptly. "I have an engagement."

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Dejectedly John Henry Smith went out into the hallway and found his hat and prepared to go. The door closed behind him. Then, from the cellarway he heard a hoarse voice.

"Gimme a dollar and I'll square it with sis," announced the voice. John Henry Smith peered into darkness.

"Are you on?" continued the voice. John grunted noncommittally.

"You won't paste me if I come up?" insisted the voice. Again John murmured assent. Thereupon a shock-haired, slovenly youth of fourteen—brother of Miss Jones—made his appearance.

"I sent her a comic," he said. "And I put your name upon it in typewriting."

John Henry Smith at this moment went through one of the desperate intervals of his career. Justice demanded that he should do something. Slaughter—a slow choking—that was the idea!

"If you touch me," came the hoarse voice of the inexorable youth, "I won't tell sis nuthin'." Then, coldly: "Do I get a dollar?"

He did.

And it was not until the engagement had been announced, some time later, that John Henry Smith got square.

"What was the verse on the comic valentine?" inquired the Observer.

"This," replied the poet, and chanted:

> "You paint your face with lots of stuff.
> It looks like thunder. Say!
> Lay off that cream-and-powder guff.
> And wash it every day."

"After receiving a message like that from a supposed admirer," remarked the Observer, "one doesn't blame the girl for feeling put out."

"Uh-huh," said the poet, inattentively. He began another story:

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There was a wife, continued the poet, who had the bet and lost it, because she couldn't believe in human nature. Her husband was a plethoric man, one of the kind who wander home to their dinners with an absent-minded air, and then consume huge quantities of corned beef and cabbage. He had a weakness for a dressing gown and slippers. He had been home to dinner, at the right hour, for more than fifteen years.

St. Valentine's day came at the appropriate and appointed time, and when the day arrived the husband was seized with a sudden madness. He decided that he would buy his wife a valentine. So he went to a shop and bought a gorgeous affair, which was properly boxed, and which was carried by him to the hall rack, where he set his burden down.

It happened that on this particular night he was engaged; one of his few engagements. The Chamber of Commerce was giving a dinner. Naturally he was expected to get into his evening clothes. As he dressed he hummed little snatches of song, for he intended dining with his wife and passing up the meal that he might face later. Surety is better than speculation.

He came downstairs all dressed up like a tango dancer and saw that his wife was looking at something. He smiled fatuously. His smile much resembled that of the young man I described when he called upon his young lady.

"Like it?" he asked of his wife. She continued to gaze stonily at the gaudy offering without speaking. Ultimately her feelings overcame her.

"To what woman," she demanded, in harsh accents, "are you taking this—this—present?"

The husband, cocksure of his evening clothes, decided that this was the moment wherein to have a little amusement.

"Guess," he grinned.

If curiosity is supposed to be a feminine failing, this man's wife could have passed any examination and could have established an alibi for her sex.

"I wish to know," she said, stonily.

"For you," he declared, triumphantly.

She received this declaration with unmeasured calm.

"Then," said she, "why didn't you put my name on the package?"

"Package?" he gasped.

"The valentine," she amended.

For a moment he was overcome. That his wife should expect him to sign her name to a little valentine which he had brought home was something beyond him.

"I—I——" he stammered.

* * *

"George," she said, in a kindly voice, "that story will not do. I find you coming downstairs in your evening clothes—no doubt you were preparing to dine with her somewhere—and trying to sneak out of the house. When I question you you inform me that the valentine is for me, realizing that this is the handiest explanation."

George started like a frightened horse. Any man falsely and unexpectedly accused will stutter and stammer like the worst wretch on earth. George, being no exception, did exactly that thing. Running his fingers around the inside of his collar, he spoke.

"Ch-ch-ch——" he began.

"I ask no explanation," she said, freezingly. She decided to take another hack. "There is no need of your making a noise like a locomotive. I'm uninterested in vaudeville imitations."

"Chamber of Commerce dinner!" bellowed George. All vestige of self-control were rapidly disappearing.

"How did you come to think of that so quickly?" she asked.

Only a few happy moments before George had been a sane and orderly business man. Now he had become a mere raving lunatic. Also his wife, impressed by the injustice that was being done her, began to exhibit emotion. Tears welled in her eyes. Her voice broke.

"Is she bub-beautiful?" she faltered.

Beautiful! George ripped out a handful of hair, recklessly disregarding the fact that he was getting bald on top.

"If you had only put my name on it," continued his wife. "If you had only done that I might have forgiven you."

Forgiven! George swore softly and aimed a kick at a fine old piece of Mexican pottery which maimed it permanently. Also it wrecked his right patent leather shoe. He spoke, but his voice was not his own. There was a strained foreign quality in it.

"After my thinking up a little surprise," he strangled, "after my trying to please——"

He paused, then delivered his execration.

"Woman!" he shouted, "so long as I live I will never try to give you another surprise. Surprising you develops a counter recoil that is liable to kill the surpriser. You get too blamed surprised!"

The sheer physical violence of his protestation impressed her. After all it might be possible that George, poor deluded boob, had been trying to please her. They went into the dining room, where George glumly filled himself with cold food, for the meal had been on the table during the whole of the dialogue. And after dinner George, from whom all thoughts of Chamber of Commerce banquet had fled, led the way into the parlor, where he delivered another powerful address, aided by appropriate gestures, on the ingratitude of women.

Finally—"I half believe you," said his wife.

"Half?" grunted George.

"No," mused his wife. "I see now that you couldn't have fibbed dexterously. You couldn't have invented all this. You haven't the imagination."

George sought refuge in injured silence.

Another thought occurred to his wife. "Perhaps," she remarked, mildly, "if you had done this sort of thing a little oftener in the last fifteen years I wouldn't have been so astonished."

* * *

"I have a little story that a man once told me," stated the poet, after he had concluded the yarn of George's dilemma. "It might be called 'The Tale of the Lost Message.'"

Whereupon he recounted to the Observer the story which the nameless man had recited to him:

It seems that one day the nameless man had dropped into a sale of articles which had been deposited in the dead letter office. Among the things which were offered was a small package containing a single, rather expensive valentine. The nameless man was not wealthy. Neither had he an obsession to become the possessor of a number of amorous verses.

Yet the valentine interested him. He couldn't shake off the curiosity which urged him to find out what expression of adoration some girl had missed. As the sale was being held on a blazing hot summer day the bidders were not essentially concerned with the sale of soft sentiments.

So the nameless man got his valentine. It was addressed to—well, say to Miss Mary Jones. Any name will do. From the appearance of the wrapper it had been all over the city.

Gazing at the wrapper, the nameless man visualized innumerable impatient postmen going from door to door with the little package, only to scrawl "Not at above address" or "Wrong address. Try," etc., or "House vacant," or something of that kind, until the wandering message found peace at length in the repositories of the dead letter office.

He opened the valentine, which was decorated on the outside with conventionally flaming hearts and roseate cupids. This was what he read:

> I have wandered far 'neath the tropic's glare,
> And north where the ice is blue,
> And yet 'tis as though I had ne'er been there,
> For my heart stays home with you.

Conventional enough, but there are infinite possibilities of speculation in the message which was never delivered. It might have been the agonized cry of a young man who had left Washington to take a position as stenographer in a manufacturing concern. It might have been a word from the dead. One word was signed—"Tom."

Valentines, valentines, valentines! Some with a message behind their banal verse; some used for insult; some——

The Observer left the poet. On his way down the street he passed a book store. Before the window stood a small boy. Before the window stood a small boy, his eyes fixed on a collection of penny valentines. He was weighing the merits of the different verses. The Observer passed on, and as the vision of the small boy recurred to him he felt a strong inclination to go back and remind the youngster that after all it isn't so much what you say as what you mean that counts.

BOBBIE HILL.